THE CLIMAX

On October 16, throngs of striking workers invaded the center of St. Petersburg. Small groups moved in from the suburbs and merged gradually into large crowds. People converged to the place where they expected something important to happen.

It was Sunday. All the shops were closed. The trolleys ran in the morning but stopped before noon. The police had been removed from the streets. Droshkies disappeared; there was a rumor that strikers would cut the harnesses of hacks that disregarded the strike.

I found the University surrounded by soldiers, but the officer had been ordered to let students and professors go in. I tried to get in touch with the party organization, but all the wires were mixed up. Finally I learned that the speakers' group was to convene at the Free Economic Society, some two miles away.

In the absence of streetcars and droshkies, I walked there through streets full of workers milling about aimlessly in small groups. Files of Cossacks cut their way through the crowd. A company of foot soldiers beat time with their heavy boots. Another company stood motionless in front of a building. The crowd did not provoke the troops, and the troops did not molest the crowd. It looked as if Trepov was testing his forces.

Not far from the Free Economic Society, a group of workers recognized me. In a moment I was surrounded.

"It has come! Should we build a barricade?"

The street had been torn up for repair; plenty of tools and materials lay around. It would not be hard to barricade the street, but what good would it do and who would defend it?

I admonished the people around me, "Leave the stones alone. . . . Wait for the signal. . . . Do not fall into the trap. . . ."

In the library of the Free Economic Society some fifteen members of our group were sitting on bundles of books, windowsills, tables. Mikhail, a six-foot-six Bolshevist agitator, jumped toward me and grabbed my hand. "Have you seen?" he shouted. "Do you realize what is going on?" His face was livid.

"Shut up or speak sensibly," I replied angrily.

"There, on the street," he continued. "Have you seen?"

"I saw a lot of people . . . troops. . . . Nothing to get hysterical about."

A woman, half-lying on the table, began to wail, "About nothing, he says, about nothing! Blood will flow, by night thousands will be dead. We called them, we brought them into the streets."

"We are the murderers!" screamed Mikhail from the height of his

